**BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

**ABSTRACT:**

**Background:** Body image can be described as the way someone views their own body and makes assumptions about how others view them. Family, friends, social pressure, and the media are some factors that influence this image. Body image is also closely linked to self-esteem: a person’s assessment or viewpoint of himself or herself. People with high self-esteem are aware of their personal qualities, value themselves, set realistic goals, manage better in tough situations, and perceive feedback or criticism as a way to improve themselves and grow. People with low self-esteem are less clear about their own beliefs, think poorly of themselves, have more hostile emotional and behavioral reactions to criticism, often set goals that are unrealistic and tend to see or expect the worst. Self-esteem can be affected by many factors, such as school, friends, and internal factors. Body image and self-esteem have long been known to be linked and are significant issues, especially among the youth.

**Aim of the study:** This paper aims to study the relationship between body image issues and self-esteem among young adults. To achieve the purpose of the study a quantitative research design has been used.

**Sample:** Data was collected from 50 individuals within the age range of 22 and 27 years, wherein 25 were males and 25 were females. The sampling technique used was a simple random sampling technique.

**Tools Used:** Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-16A, Cooper et al., 1986) were used to assess the dimensions of body image and self-esteem of each individual.

**Results:** It was found that there was no significant relationship between body image issues and self-esteem.

**KEYWORDS: Body image, Self-esteem, Perception, Young adults**

**I . INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, physical appearance plays a huge role in a person's life. People are judged and labeled according to their appearances and it impacts every aspect of life, directly and indirectly. These could lead to the emergence of body image issues, where a person feels like they are not good enough or they do not belong in their bodies. Body image can be described as the way someone views their own body and makes assumptions about how others view them. Family, friends, social pressure, and the media often influence body image. Body image is also closely linked to self-esteem. A higher self-esteem and higher sense of self-worth are likely to help young people achieve more satisfaction with their bodies and themselves.

**Self-esteem**

The concept of self-esteem generally refers to a person’s assessment or viewpoint of himself or herself. It involves a person's overall opinion of their self-worth. Self-esteem can either be a positive or negative evaluation of oneself. High self-esteem is a more approving global evaluation of self, whereas low self-esteem is a critical definition of the self. Global self-esteem stems from the overall feelings of self-worth*.* Social psychologists perceive self-esteem as the general attitude people hold toward themselves.

Recently, self-esteem has become a household word. Teachers, parents, therapists, and others are engrossed in improving self-esteem, as presumably high self-esteem will lead to positive developments.

People with high self-esteem are aware of their personal qualities, value themselves, set realistic goals, manage better in tough situations, and perceive feedback or criticism as a way to improve themselves and grow; whereas those with low self-esteem are less clear about their own beliefs, think poorly of themselves, have more hostile emotional and behavioral reactions to criticism, often set unrealistic goals, and tend to see or expect the worst.

There are claims that individuals with high self-esteem are more likable and attractive, have better relationships, and make better impressions than those with low self-esteem. However, most of these beliefs are refuted by objective measures. There is no evidence yet that shows self-esteem predicting the quality or length of relationships.

Individuals with high self-esteem are more keen to engage in groups and to give feedback about the group's approach. Self-esteem may have indirect effects on leadership as well. Those with high self-esteem tend to show stronger in-group favoritism, which may lead to bias.

Additionally, self-esteem is related to happiness. We are persuaded that high self-esteem leads to greater happiness though causation has not been established. Low self-esteem is more likely to lead to depression under certain conditions. Some studies support the buffer hypothesis, which claims that high self-esteem alleviates the effects of stress; but other studies indicate that the negative effects of low self-esteem are mainly felt in good times. Yet others find that high self-esteem leads to happier outcomes regardless of the circumstances. Overall, high self-esteem has two categories of benefits: enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings. (Baumeister et al., 2003).

The distinction is often made by researchers between global and domain-specific self-esteem. Global self-esteem can be defined as an individual’s overall evaluation of his or her worth, while domain-specific self-esteem refers to an individual’s evaluation of his or her worth in specific domains, such as interpersonal relationships, intellectual abilities, and outward appearance.

**Measurement of self-esteem**

The most common method of measuring self-esteem is the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) developed by Morris Rosenberg. It is a self-report measure of global self-esteem. There are also more specific measures of self-esteem that are used to evaluate self-esteem in particular domains, like academics, interpersonal relationships, physical appearance, and athletics, which uses the performance scores in each particular domain to indicate the self-esteem in that given domain.

**Body image**

Body image is a multi-faceted construct composed of self-perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behavior about one’s body (Cash et al., 1990; Grogan, 1999; Thompson et al., 1999). Body image is often considered a fixed attribute, but it is not fixed. Rather, a person's body image constitutes a dynamic relationship between the individual, the body, and the social environment. In simpler words, body image can be described as the personal relationship we share with our body and how we feel in our own body. Multidimensional assessments of body image have developed over the last few decades as a result of identifying its multiple features. These include body size estimation, body dissatisfaction, appearance investment, body objectification, body ideal internalization, body image quality of life, body appreciation, body responsiveness, drive for thinness, and drive for masculinity (Calogero et al., 2010).

**Development of body image**

Body image develops gradually since childhood. Both past as well as current experiences affect the development of body image. Culture, interpersonal experiences, and physical changes are the usual factors that shape body image.

**Body image and self-esteem**

It has long been known that body image and self-esteem are linked. Further, they are significant issues for young people, especially during adolescence and puberty. These issues affect people throughout their lives, from childhood to old age. Though past research focused chiefly on body image and self-esteem in children and adolescents, more recent research has begun to focus on the older population. Issues with body image are associated with an overall poor self-concept as well as lower self-esteem in adolescents, including poor academic, social, and academic self-concepts. Factors such as self-esteem, gender, media, and pressure or support from friends and family influence self-esteem during adolescence. In a similar vein, factors such as body image, body weight, academic performance, athletic ability, and participation in social activities influence self-esteem. (O’Dea, 2012).

Mellor, D. et al. (2010) examined the relationship between body image and self-esteem across time and age for men and women. Cross-sectionally, higher self-esteem was found to be linked to lower body dissatisfaction, but there was no consistent relationship between these variables across time for age and gender. Women had greater dissatisfaction with their bodies than men. However, men placed greater importance on their appearance than women and reported high levels of body dissatisfaction too.

**II. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research design:** This present research was based on a quantitative research design as the numerical data is collected and analyzed. 50 participants were selected randomly. The researcher made sure that all participants belonged to the age range of 21-27.

**Study setting:** A physical survey was conducted at Manipur University. The participants were selected randomly. It took three days to collect the data.

**Subjects:** The data was collected from 50 participants, which included 25 males and 25 females. The participants were students of Manipur University.

**Sampling:** The sample of the present study was a simple random sampling technique where 50 participants were selected randomly.

**Inclusion criteria:**

* Both males and females were taken as participants.
* All the participants are of age range between 22-27 years.
* Participants were students of Manipur University
* The minimum qualification of the participants is a graduate

**Tools and Scales:**

1. SEMI-STRUCTURED PROFORMA

Semi-structured proforma designed particularly for the present study is used to gather the necessary information of the participants. This includes Age, Gender, Religion, Qualification, and Marital status.

2. ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (Rosenberg, 1965)

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965. It measures self-esteem and consists of ten items answered on a four-point Likert-type scale – ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'. The RSES has good predictive validity. It also has internal consistency as well as test–retest reliability. Cronbach coefficient is high (M = 0.81). Thus, it supports the internal coherence of the scale. Over a period of 2 weeks, test-retest reliability was assessed and it revealed correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. The RSES demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, which points to excellent internal consistency.

3. BODY SHAPE QUESTIONNAIRE (BSQ-16A) (Cooper et al., 1986)

The BSQ was designed by P.J. Cooper, Taylor, Z. Cooper, and C.G. Fairburn in 1986. It is a self-report measure of body shape preoccupations. The BSQ-16A is a shortened form of the original 34-item BSQ. BSQ-16A consists of a 16-item questionnaire which is to be responded to by the participant using a six-point Likert i.e., 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often', 'very often' and 'always'. Each item is scored from 1 to 6 with "Never=1" and "Always=6", yielding a possible minimum score of 16 and a maximum score of 96. Using Pearson’s correlations, all of the shortened BSQ forms were tested for convergent validity against the body dissatisfaction subscale of the EDI and the 34-item BSQ. Cronbach’s alpha was used to estimate internal consistency. Additionally, a two-factor solution found that the two factors retained were highly correlated in the non-clinical sample for the BSQ-16A scale, *r*(1167)  = .85, *p* < .001. Pearson's correlations were used to assess test-retest reliability. On both occasions taken three weeks apart, the students’ responses to the BSQ were highly correlated (*r* ≥ .97, *p*< .001 for each BSQ form). Moreover, the internal reliability was quite acceptable for the French version of the BSQ.

**Statistical analysis:** For achieving the objectives of the present study, the collected data was subjected to Pearson’s correlation to examine the relationship between variables using SPSS version 22.

**III. RESULTS**

As part of the study, a set of two questionnaires were filled out by the participants to measure body image issues and self-esteem. A total of 25 males and 25 females filled up the questionnaires. The data was then subjected to SPSS. Pearson’s correlation was carried out to see the relationship between self-esteem and body image.

Figure 1: Gender of the sample

Figure 1 shows the gender demographic of the sample of the study. This sample consists of 25 males and 25 females.

Figure 2: Age range of the sample

Figure 2 shows the age range of the sample of the study. There are 11 participants in the age group of 20 to 22, 33 participants in the age group of 23 to 25, and 6 participants in the age group of 26 to 28.

Table 1: Relationship between body image issues and self-esteem

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Body image issues | Self-esteem |
| Body image |  |  |
| Self-esteem | -.238 |  |

The quantitative data was subjected to an SPSS package and bivariate correlation was carried out. As seen in above table 1, r(df)=-.238 and p.096 Thus, there is a weak negative relationship between body image issues and self-esteem but it is statistically insignificant. As there is no statistical significance in the relationship between body image issues and self-esteem, we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between body image issues and self-esteem.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

The present study evaluated the relationship between body image issues and self-esteem among young adults. Results suggest an insignificant relationship between body image issues and self-esteem. Though body image is a key factor influencing the development of self-esteem, self-esteem can be affected by many other factors, such as school, friends, and internal factors; thus contributing to the results. Other factors that influence self-esteem include genetics, personality, life experiences, age, health, thoughts, social circumstances, etc. According to behavioral genetic research, though both genetic and environmental factors influence global self-esteem, environmental factors account for more variance than genetic factors, with the heritability of self-esteem estimated to be about 40% (Orth et al., 2018).

Abell, S.C. (1988) suggests researchers look at a few other facets of human activity along with self-esteem studies. Studying the nature and frequency of a person's activities may help in better evaluating the relationship between body image and self-esteem. For example, a teenage girl who takes an active part in co-curricular activities might depend a lot on her appearance for feelings of self-worth. On the other hand, a successful and occupied businessman or woman may engage in many other activities that increase self-esteem and thus, not be as obsessed with their physical appearance. He also added that generally moderate to strong correlations have been found between these two variables, yet it is still largely unknown precisely in which way they are correlated. Hence, it can be understood that self-esteem is a complex notion and depends on a lot more than body image.

Nonetheless, a negative correlation does exist between body image and self-esteem. It can thus be stated that people who have fewer issues with their body image, i.e. a higher satisfaction with their bodies, have a higher self-esteem. On the other hand, people who face more body image issues, i.e. those who have a negative body image have lower self-esteem. These findings are consistent with that of Mellor et al. (2010) whose studies showed that self-esteem had a moderate, negative correlation with body dissatisfaction for both males and females and that the strength of this relationship remained constant over 2 years and across adulthood. They are also supported by previous studies examining body image and self-esteem that have demonstrated that the more positive the individual's body image, the higher the self-esteem, and the more negative the individual's body image, the lower the self-esteem.

A few limitations might affect the findings of the present study. First is the limited size of the population. Second, the population was only from a limited area. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole global population. Moreover, there were some barriers in word meaning in the questionnaires, so in some words, basic translation was made according to the researcher's way. Lastly, factors such as age, culture, and educational qualification might affect body image and self-esteem and need to be taken into consideration.

**V. CONCLUSION**

The findings from the current study concluded that there is a negative relationship between body image issues and self-esteem. Individuals who have fewer issues with their body image have higher self-esteem, while those with more body image issues have lower self-esteem. However, the relationship is not statistically significant.

**REFERENCES**

1. Abell, S.C. (1988). *The relationship between body image and self-esteem among undergraduates*. [Master’s Thesis*,* Loyola University Chicago]. Retrieved from https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\_theses/3546

2. Baumeister, R.F., Campbell, J.D., Krueger, J.I., & Vohs, K.D. (2003). Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest,* 4, 1-44.

3. Calogero, R. & Thompson, J. (2010). Gender and Body Image*. Handbook of gender research in psychology,* 153-184.DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4419-1467-5\_8.

4. Cash, T.F., & Pruzinsky, T. (Eds.). (1990). *Body Images: Development, deviance, and change.* The Guilford Press.

5. Grogan, S. (1999). *Body image: Understanding body dissatisfaction in men, women, and children*. London: Routledge.

6. Mellor, D., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., McCabe, M.P., & Ricciardelli, L. (2010). Body Image and Self-Esteem Across Age and Gender: A Short-Term Longitudinal Study. *Sex Roles,* 63(9), 672-681. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-010-9813-3

7. O'Dea, J. A. (2012). Body image and self-esteem. In T. F. Cash (Ed.), Encyclopedia of body image and human appearance (pp. 141–147). Elsevier Academic Press.

8. Orth, U & Robins, R. (2018). Development of Self-Esteem Across the Lifespan. *Handbook of personality development,*328-344.

9. Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image.* Princeton University Press.

10. Thompson, J. K., Heinberg, L. J., Altabe, M. N., & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (1999). *Exacting beauty: Theory, assessment, and treatment of body image disturbance.* American Psychological Association. DOI: 10.1037/10312-000